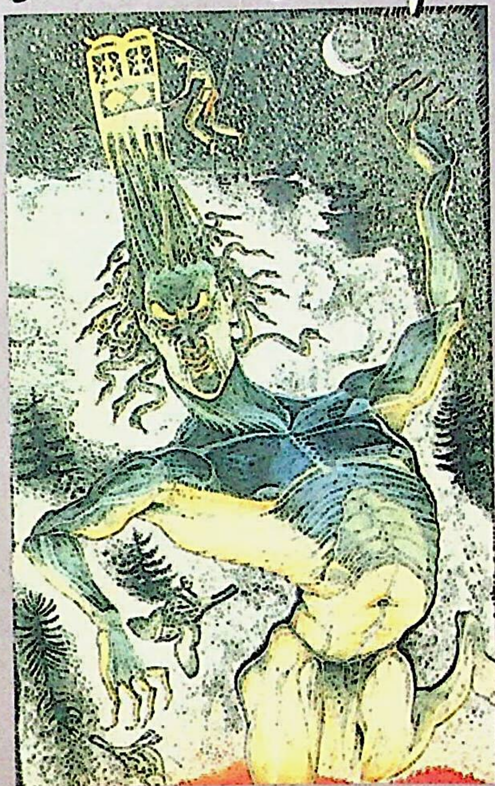
S.Y.

AJANTA

Dream Script



Translated from Telugu by

Vegunta Mohan Prasad







Dream Script

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From: Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.
Courtesy: National Museum, New Delhi.

Sahitya Akademi Award-winning Collection of Poems in Telugu

Dream Script

AJANTA

Translated from Telugu
by
Vegunta Mohan Prasad



SAHITYA AKADEMI

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Contents

Intro...

Poetry is an act of dream. The one I'm writing hasn't passed the 'Litmus test' yet. I'm living in the test tube. Living in half – truths. Living in the chemical shades all too different and divergent. Existing in illusions and delusions. A frightening reality on the one side: an abstract world devolving upon dreams beyond time and space on the other. Here in is the front of my confrontation. The goal of poetry can't be seen through the camera. The world seen as it is isn't the real one, after all. Reality is, really lifting the veil of reality. The very path of my poetry lies in the waking up of man's sublimated strength of a veiled dream revealed in all its sovereignty hoping for a new world. Not with pen and paper at all. The letters of the alphabet must reveal themselves, if anything. I know that secret. The wit of dream I got right at my birth. Letter after letter. Sentence after sentence. All an 'act of the mind'. A set of strange sentencing. There I am. I'm there in a new letter born blooming in star dust. That's what 'dream script is. Life present is goalless, unseen meaninglessness.... the one invincible is the sovereign strength of dream. The one indefatigable.

Because man is prime for everything I like seeing myself so much in every man. Wherever he is, man is one. Man's conscience is the same right from the very first moment his steps are heard on the face of the earth. i am in every man. In every man's dream. In the beauty of the dream. In pain., in sorrow, in flaming wounds I am. In the cry of man in the desert. The letters have no hand – cuffs. The globe has no frontiers.

The life – line of man's language lies only in the reverberation of his soul. Every letter is a man. Every man a letter. I have a faith. Like the features of man's face, like the frame of man's limbs letters too have a form, a posture, a movement harmonious with thought rhythm, dance, smell – I believe. This then is the secret of dream script. The strange gestures I make in the day to day terror of life are my new rhetoric.

I am not afraid of declaring that in my poetry there sounds some special sound of the absence of sham far beyond the preordained emotions. Poetry is a secret play. My faith is that man in darkness alone can clearly see the light of the lamp unextinguished on the line of life: even experience wise. The poet must see the world but should not let him be seen by the world. I quote from my poem "Studio of Darkness". "My abode is perhaps somewhere in the emptiness on the slab stones of darkness blazing. In the glowing dark, I saw the dance of a saber in a lifeless form. Doesn't this part of the poem show how a man in darkness can reveal the mystery of man's life and death? Don't the lines tell the harsh truth that death isn't an accident but an evolution? "Death alone is the truth as in a tragic sentence that dangles between fear and wonder". Isn't this warning enough? Man is dying just because he is existing. Death is not physical. Moment to moment, life: moment to moment, death. I saw many a time my own death in broad daylight just to test if I am still alive. Can't but. I wear as crown the sentence; "Death is a lamp post decapitated." Death is life too. After all, aren't we living in the shadows of death right now? Death, no more a secret. Hope and hopelessness aren't two things. Life and death aren't separate. Man's birth is just beside man's grave. All one circle. All just one script. Just one letter of the alphabet. Reality is not beautiful. Reality, bitter poison. The poet with poison suspended in the throat is born

right here. May be, I can not identify even myself while the poem is being created. May be, a mask is a must. That's why poetry is a secret game. Entirely unknown, unknown. Full of dreams. Full of incantations.

A word right here. All my poems are rough drafts. Not a single poem has given me total satisfaction. Not only the ones published in magazines but also the ones included in anthologies are mostly rough drafts. I think there are four or five versions of my poems like 'Somnolence', 'Scene of Falling Trees', 'An Ascetic's Anguish' and a few others. Perfection is my aim. Call it 'crystallization' if you will. Can't say if that is possible in the rest of my life.

A poem once published doesn't stay with me. I won't let it. The next minute it must decompose right under my nose. I can't stand before a mirror for long. That's against my very nature. My job is just to dry the poem upon the clothesline of the world. I have no other business with that poem. No danger even if the wind or whatever blows out the poem. I can recite every poem I wrote. All the poems of this anthology are the ones I recalled sitting before the pedestal of memory. Dates don't matter. I still think of the poem I had written in 1948. Changes, also if necessary. Depends on the poet's vision of life. Poetry has no calendars. I have no patience with the word 'evolutionary'. There might be about forty poems I had written. Poems that appear in this anthology were the ones written between 1948 and 1992. I can't give exactly the dates or years of composition of any one of these. The reason is not just that the poems published are not with me but that I don't allow then to. If one takes poetry as an endless flood, the stream is just the same anywhere and everywhere. There won't be any chemical infection to the letter in the alphabet that comes straight from the heart.

Poetry is a thousand faced one. Aren't architecture and language in tune with the times important in poetry, whatever be the idea or the body of the poem! That's the oxygen of my poetry. My lone aim is to create a respectable place for verse libre. Can't say to what extent I have succeeded. I salute all the good poets, the first thing in the morning and step out into the flood of life. And creation of the poem starts once more. That's my daily activity. My endless meditation.

(1993) Ajanta

ALL JUST ONE SOUND

Didn't I say didn't I that all is just one sound
In the all pervading sound circle
Bringing to mind the hands releasing ecliptic primeval scenes
When your soft eyes are tearful
Didn't I say didn't I say
That death is but a warning
That the sound of the fall of a leaf is but an invitation
Didn't I say didn't I say

As a casement opened itself
On the sound that shook in fear
Me and my body at once broken vertically with two faces
As I was stepping into another casement
Didn't I say didn't I say
That all is just one movement
That man continues to speak even after death
Didn't I say didn't I say

Behind an enigmatic sound
My verses diving deep in the chasm are
Ashore somewhere dancing time's triad
Didn't I say didn't I say
That in the alphabet are great wonders
That the sovereignty of sound is eternal
Didn't I say didn't I say

All is one sound
One movement
One riddle

It's me underneath a life that conquered the body
The sound of a bone blooming in the chest of sound
All is one craft of the heart. (1992)

TOUCH OF FIRE

Even while smelling the flower of fiery pain
Comes inebriation to dreamy eyes in the abyss of seconds
Even if wounded among streams of swords he glows glorious
Wearing contradictions as my spinal cord
I accepted long ago silently the secret of showers of rain on the desert

Time is none other than me

Past, present, dawn and dusk, the sport of murder by the second

Demons inhaling and exhaling on insane fields
Wide eyes of hunger expanding on walls of life
Images of lovers in tears
All are heaps of ash behind an only scene!

I despise waiting in thorny squares
Despair, deep sighs, sleepy forests are prohibited
Isn't the modern man the fiery eyed?
Killed and the killer he is
Terrors by the second are my make – up
Red lamps alone my life – long baggage

I who entered the war of life a moment late
Have seen horror in the leaves of trees
Seen the stony hands of body guards in man's thoughts
Seen the magic script of sun rays on red hot wounds

Death alone is real
Like a tragic sentence of life running between fear and wonder
Death is a door opening suddenly

Death a road taken vanishing half way
Death is a lamp post beheaded
Death is human sigening from the factory tongues
inside city walls

It's me who stood up naked in the house of death
Pain is my face
In the dust of man's feet sanctified by the fire of pain
I'll compose the song of freedom that I sing posthumously.
Intoxication for my alphabet only then
Under the tree of fire tomorrow I am another man

(1978)

SOMNOLENCE

Nobody anywhere, all got home
The student closed his books
The street singer stopped the song
Nobody anywhere, all got home

Murderers put away their knives
Demons got down to the pit of hell
Heads of states washed their bloody hands
Nobody anywhere, all got home

All looked up their faces in the mirror once
Found out what was there in the abyss
Closed the doors just before death opened its mouth
Nobody anywhere, all got home

Workers are drying their tears in the moonlight of huts
Prisoners are roaming the sky in the void behind the bars
Beggars on pavements covered themselves with wall posters
Nobody anywhere, all got home

Prostitutes have shed poisonous clothes
Hung safe their tear stained breasts on the walls
Nobody anywhere, all are asleep,
All have hidden carefully fossils of life in the cellars of the earth

Demons, politicians, ministers, heads of states
Simple people, virtuous men – all are asleep
All have taken shelter in the asylum of the dark
Flags won't flap now

Laws won't act now
Clocks won't work now

Nobody anywhere, all are asleep
All have taken shelter in the asylum of the dark
No difference between the killer and the sacrificed animal now
No difference between the ugly and the handsome now
No barbed wire between man and man now
No one knows at all fear of death now
Nobody anywhere, all are asleep
All have taken shelter in the asylum of the dark

This is the instant of deadly serpents casting off sloughs
This is the instant of some unknown worlds coming to being
Beyond time and space
Nobody anywhere, all are asleep
All have taken shelter in the asylum of the dark

Wolves of thought will haunt no one tonight
Life like a tiger will not frighten anyone now
Nobody anywhere, all are asleep
All have taken shelter in the asylum of the dark

It's only tomorrow that the thunder on the cannon will be heard
Men rolling the earth planet up can't fight hand to hand
in the dark
Gramaphone music on war clouds won't be heard
anywhere yet
Nobody anywhere, all are asleep
All have taken shelter in the asylum of the dark

Fear of the postman is only in the morning, not now
The letter posted by the murderer won't reach until tomorrow
The fate of fugitive sons won't bother any mother now
A friend plotting perfidy is known to none just yet

Nobody anywhere, all are asleep
All have taken shelter in the asylum of the dark

No hopes, no jealousies, no despairs
No sighs, no hate, no outrages
No troubles, no tears
Everywhere only one silence
An only lonely heart throb (1954)

SALUTATION TO ROADS

The language I speak is different
At the time of death wish intensifying in man's heart of hearts
The roar of secret doors opening mouth
The poetry I write is different
A running brook of a broken brain

Since violence to the alphabet is no poetry
Since the madcap's parade of swords in the towers of the
alphabet is suicidal
Away from the disguised demons
I write poetry even while walking on the roads

Roads are the life in my body
They are the very veins of a secret world I search for.
Feel like seeing man's inner eyes between doors of hell?
Feel like listening man within man's conversation?
Feel like touching my hands creating a whirl wind?

Roads are my secret signs
Look at your own reflection once
In the beads of sweat on the shoulders of roads
While the rays of sun punish the unseen assassin

Roads are my living grammar
Each man that walks is one who is mirroring me
Just one language, one tumult, one form, one one's own story

Have I not dedicated my dream studded life only to the roads
All along my spinal cord are the feet of flowers of aeons
Breaking out from flags, slogans, jails, chains, hunger factories,
bed rooms of death

It's me only spread like thousands of swords on
my shoulders in every step

Men all around me
Men devouring men
Men walking passively between pain and pleasure
Men coming carrying deserts in palms
Men hanging man's future in mansions that stand like
death sentences

Men flashing like tears
Men shooting like stars of blood from flaming wounds
They all come tearing through me
All of them come breaking the secret water falls
behind my eyes

Roads are my entire property
Feel like hearing the terrible midnight laughter of city jungles?
Feel like seeing man turning lionine?
Feel like touching my hands annihilating illusion?
It's enough heeding once the warning of the stone statues at
the turn of the roads
Look once at your own reflection in the dream waters under
the bridge

Roads are my theme
The street sage enjoying the deadly venom of the dark is the
hero of my poem

Do you know who I am
Know you who they are flinging clouds of sorrow at me
Know you who they are silencing me
Know you who they are pushing me into the pit of night
Know you who they are stinging my brain
Know you who they are auctioning life's fragrance mid street
All along the roads under the cloud dispersed sky
You a wandering ascetic saluting ruined trees
You an adventurer embracing destructive machines

You a man transforming your own hands as ropes of execution
You are none but me
Can I ever annihilate the horrible deadly flames of
hands haunting me
In the devilish city being built by man it's not him alone but me
too a prisoner
In the pot of poison among seats of judgements
In the sinful heaps of ash under man's feet
Me too am there

Roads are my prosody
Just enough if a pure man manifests even for a second in the
dream waters of a head
broken to pieces
Some strange sensibility at two roads meeting
A new language generates just there.
I adorn myself with flowers of the alphabet dropped
by dust trees
Roads are my lexicon verily my world of words (1980)

COMPUTER GRAPHICS

Ever seen horror in shadows sliding down the walls
You are talking to a wall
You are feeling the hands cuffed
You are knocking on the door of a heart that shouted rebellion
How will a lamp be kindled in tears?
Will a cannon of words ring on lips blood shot?
Question is the answer to question.
I am man hurling knives at the tiger's heart the land of life
One second is enough
In the endless void eternal repose or else valour
And after that no wall is seen

Ever heard the conversation of dry leaves in a whirl wind ?
You are speaking to a shadow

Once at demon dusk I looked at my face in the mirror
Behind the reflection there rose suddenly some one torn into
two fragments
My severed head in his hands that shone like two
unsheathed swords
Isn't man's ostentation only at the face of death?
Truly how beautiful the setting sun on the dais of the sky!

Ever heard the foot falls of a virgin tree walking?
You are speaking to void

When hope and despair come face to face
Roar of two skeletons laughing
The cold touch of a hand could be death, or the
embrace of a dream virgin
I'm man assembling fierce fiery eyes in the banned city

Ican't bear seeing man turning into a statue on life's dais,
can't see

The same routine life, same road, same wall, same clock,
same faces intolerable, intolerable
If the scene doesn't change exit or take to sword

Will your fore finger change as a revolver at a mere touch?
You are talking to fire

This is the world of disguised actors, all are in masks
Mask for the alphabet, mask for thought
Face behind a face, all those who buried deep the pure
sun rises themselves

The murderer making darkness aesthetic also is a stranger
What a horror giants shaking hands behind a beautiful curtain!

Ever heard the roar of secret oceans in the vicious embrace of
hunger?
You are talking to the man wearing new eyes

How I love the quest between sheets of rain
Rain on clocks, rain on the scaffold, rain on trekking lamp
posts
Rain on the wings of ancient ravens in ruined courtyards, rain
on the dead bodies exhaling
Rain on the breasts of the city Goddess, rain in the eyes of the
Goddess of the word
Will life's secret be reflected in drops of rain?
Will a thought dropped somewhere sometime
ago bloom again
Question is the answer to question.
I'm man hurling knives at the heart of the primate tiger
There alone eternal repose, or valour (1982)

DEBASED DUSK

Darkness on the syllable just then bloomed
Darkness in the unfolding of two thoughts
Whichever way you see are conflicts of severed hands
Under the giant tree of routine life
How can wounded dreams radiate light?

Darkness when two hearts open
Darkness when two lovers laugh
See, wolves have taken seats on the dais of affection at the
doors of heart
How can fear singed throats sing songs of fire?

Where tears are frozen
At the feet of the virgin of swords in the graveyard of hunger
Where man is cutting himself to bits and pieces
How can we see the beauty of life?

Friend, I am forever cheated
All in life the sound of dry leaves falling
Can I at least for a second stop the wheel of time?
My face broken to bits by the slashing rain of yesterdays

Can I reinstall myself?
Friend, I'm leaving forever

Pitiable, detestable, lightless, this means dusk
Like an eunuch's dream
Vomits blood on the thighs of the dark

See, stars won't be reflected in the breasts of the dark
Behind the circles of sighs
The man I stand for was cursed right at birth
Long ago, some day, some one
Has stolen the sun rises from behind his eyes (1978)

SCENE OF TREES FALLING

No hope, no scope
Nowhere any sign suggesting any road to any destination.
I guess life goes on like this flow of tears only
I guess it shows the scene of trees falling all along the road
Or else such discordant notes will not be heard this
beauteous evening.
Dust of the road, poverty and all won't flow frenziedly
on friend Venkatrao's face alone.
So we can now say for certain
Say with proof friend Venkatrao is jobless
A young one sitting skeletal on a topsyturvy dream
Donned with needles head to foot
Pock-marks all over his face
Longings of statues in stone in his eyes
All around him trees sinking with the weight of defeat.

One can see the same scene on a larger scale with a
magnifying glass
Can see with one's own eyes the genesis of a sad fire under
the deep blue skies
Can imagine where, in which posture, friend Venkatrao is
immolating himself.
Presently Venkatrao's dwelling is under the sky only

As unemployed Venkatrao is releasing his life mid street city
The sun is sunken for no reason
Not even a leaf on any tree will flutter
No news on telephone wires go on

As unemployed Venkatrao turns like a dry leaf in a dusty whirl
Householders that day take to renunciation

Mothers blessed with children jump into wells
Students consign their books mid street to fire.

As unemployed Venkatrao is weaving in the hearts of the city
as a spider
No one in the government buildings can breath easily even for
a second
An officer holding pen and paper signs the resignation paper
voluntarily
The flag on the government building may hang its head in shame

As unemployed Venkatrao hides his hunger in chips and stones
Politicians buy them in auction
Poets and painters research on his tears
To know what the colour of sorrow is like
They search for the genealagy of darkness in the dust of his feet

As unemployed Venkatrao is reminiscing his childhood
Kids in the city will not touch food that part of the day
No wonder if a snake bites the children plucking flowers
Not unexpected is the fall of a squat mango tree in the backyard

Unemployed Venkatrao is a blot on this city -
Holding the lamp of pain
Holding the key of total destruction.
One can see several awesome sights
In Venkatrao's dark hell hole of life.
Judges at all times keep on saving him from
Committing the greatest sin of dying.
Even street beggars infuse a new breath in him
No exaggeration saying even tiny ants appraise him of the lust
for life

Venkatrao the unemployed never dies
Hence the discordant notes all round the city this
beauteous evening
The scene of falling trees all along Venkatrao's walk (1954)

AN ASCETIC'S ANGUISH

Brother, are you at ease
At least, are you, worshipping the books?

If not me, are you, bringing name to the family
Without torturing mother and father
Without their flowing as tears?

Already how many *Ugadis* came and went by
And how many deaths I escaped in every step I can't say in
detail but..

When or which second the sky collapses on me
When or which electric pole entwines my neck
But for now, I am at ease in this small hell

Standing on a parallel line somewhere far away from you
Away from myself by tens of thousands of miles
Disseminated myself like smoke on my own aether

My only program these days is
Burying dream virgins at nights
Yet can't say for certain
On which fertile cemetery my foot print will be

Meanwhile, hear you must, these absurdities
If I don't mention my daily apprehensions haunting me.
I am scared of seeing my face in the mirror
Inexpressible fear in looking at the letters in my signature
My index finger is towards fear everyday.....

Especially I will tell you of a strange thing, listen
Say, some one has met with an accident as I walk on the road,
The crowd standing around look at me quizzically
How strange! Both look alike, they wonder

Why, I saw my own corpses on the road a million times !

Believe it or not, brother, I tell the truth
The day I stepped in the city I saw with my own eyes the sun
vomiting blood !
Venomous winds all around manoeuvres whichever way you see
Roads splashing dust in the eyes, men making men vanish
mysteriously
All a mighty magic !

Well, what use now digging the past?
Is it not impossible to alter decisions made on one's own !
Alas, I didn't listen to mother keeping the lamp of pain
and pleasure on the pial
Alas, I didn't see the evil in the lamp's creeping shadow!
An all time lie felling the hell created with my own hands
Now on, life is full of void. '

Probably you can't remember it now-
I made mother and father almost cry
One evening you were not even ten then.
Shedding tears in the enveloping darkness,
They said, I alone was their bridge of troubles.
That was the last day my seeing you
I plucked away their hope at the plant stage itself
I transformed them literally to tears.

Even as adoring the beauties of rainbows,
I got stuck in a forest of falsehood.
I swooned with fragrance under the 'blossom of sky'

Pain may go on like a great flame any amount of time thus
My story may go far upto thousands of words still, some hope,
Won't good days come at last, some day, won't this dark
night go away?

Brother, give them this very hope.
Install peace at home for a moment in my name
Ask mother-father bless me once with their cool hands
Ask them pray for me on a cool evening! (1951)

CURVED LINE

One sign enough, on the curved line one vibration, enough
In the forests of dreams a tumult of one moment, enough
On lips stuck in stance of silence a fragment of cloud, enough
After that all is horror, horror

As unseen eyes rain fire on the dais of ash
You can appear in a thousand forms before yourself.

You can turn into a devil

As memories of the past in empty oceans haunt, haunt
Nothing else you hear there
Except the wounded man veiled by dust of clouds wailing
death,

Friend, I committed a crime.
As the head on the silent throne broke into pieces
I made myself impious among vulgar words
I forsook my reflections I carefully hid in the magic mirror
wilfully

Friend, I committed a crime, friend I committed an atrocity.
I with my sharp darkish nails tortured the magical alphabet
that bloomed
In the secret gardens behind the unseen ramparts

I with my own hands, brought to ashes the treasured
sunlight in my palms.

Friend I committed a crime, friend I committed a sin.
At moonlight the frowning dance of giants on the pavilion
Atrocious, atrocious I am the cause.

Punishment inevitable
If down the memory lane, the only mark of blood is gone
If in the volatile valleys, the sound of a mad drum stops
Atrocious, atrocious I am the mad one.

Punishment inevitable
I am burning my hands of venomous snakes in the blazing
tongues of anguish under the tree of lust.
Letters of my alphabet will be seen no more in the magic
mirror.
Friend, can you say where death's secret of life is?

One sign, enough on the curved line one vibration, enough
In the forest of dreams a tumult of one second, enough
After that all is horror, horror. (1985)

THE NAMELESS

Great serpents won't talk
Giant trees won't talk

A violent thought that entered
Behind life's strategy like a giant serpent
Is not your question all are questions?

Great serpents won't talk
Giant trees won't talk

Can my fingers painting magical chants
Slaying summer with rain drops
Hear terrible truths splashing in the heart of the universe?
Then you - a question to yourself

Great serpents won't talk
Giant trees won't talk

Beyond the dream frontiers on the top most line
An only eye splendid - unmoving, unmoving (1988)

DREAM SCRIPT

Nothing to do with watches melting, there's one flaming
moment in life's combat
I see the truth, I see the dream script surrealistic behind the
real on man's face
I see the angry wings on man's mighty shoulders
I see the secret war waging within the imprisoned land
piercing the night
A bullet in slow motion, wearing dreadful perfumed
dreams of forest flowers
Who, that dauntless one!
Friend, right now I'm in your dream
In dream's resurgence I hear the chains breaking
Wonder if the world is unfolding in the compassionate hands
kindly lifting the downtrodden
Friend, Fire, your name can I for once, set my foot on your
hellish, fiery spears of fingers?
Maybe, they'll etch interrogations on your face,
the political analysts
Yet, I for one, would hail you, "creator," "creator"
"Destroyer" I would even shout.
Isn't it after stabbing the dark, a creation, a new world?
Comrade, would the rest of life suffice to echo your song?
Meanwhile, I'm unmasking my word-body for ever
Naked letter, a weapon too! (1992)

STUDIO OF DARKNESS

What if my abode is perhaps somewhere in the void on the
slabstones of darkness
blazing in dream chains
Yet, I have seen darkness glowing in the void
Have seen in the flaming darkness a lifeless idols sword dance
Am I really alive?
And when can I hear my echo again in the tear burnt
shadows

I am walking in void
Walking among darkish poems
Walking among destructive sounds the murderer
Is making in the recesses of the dark
Am I really alive
And when can I hear my foot falls in the burning forests.

I am walking in void
Walking in chasms of the dark
Walking in the dust of dreams on dark rocks of death
Am I really alive
Is death just life opening another door?
And when will the snake of fire lost in meditation open its eye
On my head. (1975)

ROOTS ARE HERE....

Fine, the worms and insects on the wall of the rented house, Vighneswara just beside, fine, Ravi varma's paintings, yet after all those....

As I wake up in the morning, turning the disk of the sun towards me, I look sprinkling flowers at my wife's feet, a mother after mother in old age; It is only in her hands that I am living; I touch her hands wet with pain and pleasure affectionately once, filling in my eyes to the full the life force transmitting through her gentle fingers, In her touch and companionship, then with faltering steps I go out entering my world.

An extremely simple world; may be the breeze of the neem tree as a symbol! The photos of our departed souls of mother and father in the shadows of darkness of the room; truly a fancy bringing to mind lives marked by their attire, adornment, precept, austerity and tradition; a big ornamented chest by the wall in one corner of the room; Just aside a wooden safe, the Senior Primer, the five Great Epics, Bharatha & Ramayanas on the old book rest, coming from generations which are our treasures till today; specially my tears won't stop when I think of the Indira Vikasa Patras my revered mother has securely kept in the Bhagavadgita; I have seen divinity in the anxiety of a mother, now I see them in her eyes, in the eyes of my wife.

After all, all are darlings of *Saraswathi* in our house, but untouched by wealth; however unbearable the day to day life, however painful being pricked by needles, I let not its shadow fall on the children; yet one pain....

Our eldest son who left the house in a huff -holding a master's

degree, has not come back to our eyes till now. He wrote a letter just once saying he was searching for new meanings of life and that he threw all the degrees along with the sacred thread into the Ganges. No trace of him afterwards. How much I was shaken with the hear say that he was wandering in the wounded people's hearts somewhere. Now all my fear is when, on which day, what bad news I will have to hear; I heave sigh in a silence.

Our second one also is astute, severe and hot in words, of special attraction, " who will live in dark rooms, who will live in chains, that is no life ..." true, true, true. It's a whirlwind blowing the time he remains at home. Now that he hasn't come out of the university campus, he is secure for the time being.....

Coming to daughters, theirs is all a shimmering world on the rainbows. Both our tiny mothers are post-graduates too. Not just in the dress or addressing, their thoughts too are ultra modern, just the topic of marriage brought, they explode in anger. Is it now, and in these days, first job, anything else only after that; listening to them I smile inwardly.

After bath and all wearing another body over the body, touching up the wrinkles on the face once, I step on the road as my wife comes up to the gate, a must in the daily routine.....

Even if days rolling by wrap round the feet, even if the body is twisted, even if some warnings are heard in the air, I can not but watch the movement of man in the flow of life. Several bodies twisting round one body, several hearts entering one heart, all are common folk, ordinary house holders carrying the burden of life with great strain, pure human fragrance. I can not live unless I hear the heart beat of man, pressing the flowing waters to my heart.

Oh! It's you, where, how, doing what? Still there? In the same village, of course working? How is the nation going, by the way? Is the common man dying, or living? How is the world going, by the way? This gulf war a tragedy. Eclipse of the Soviet Sun another tragedy, another tragedy... I am walking on the road sprinkling the pure human sounds on my head....

What a tumult under the trees that stood all along the road as if waiting for me in queue. The ascetic remained there the same, sitting, entwining the lamp post. And what to say of the *Kamadhenu* accepting only news papers as food? I moved on slowly.....

Two street demons holding flags on head are axing hands and legs terribly. Demons? Opponent political beasts? Mafia, Morphia gang leaders?

Far at the turn of the road crowds of mob, angry protests of hunger on poverty line, firings, cries for help, 'curfew', 'curfew' - somebody shouting, all cleared in a second.....

But I didn't move, I stood there stand still finding my resemblance in the dead bodies twisting round my legs.

This is the life I am seeing, this is the life, life haunting me life, lifelessness? Enough; I have lived for sixty years, enough. I have walked in the flow of waters for sixty years. Death or life from now is one, all is sadlessness, sadlessness. (1992)

MATHS: DREAMS, TEARS

Am throwing stones on still waters an evening
Nothing special waters being wounded
Surprisingly the wounded waters puffed up bursting on the city.

On a sentence running longish, fire on one side and a water fall on another
Are the eyes mine?

I opened the doors of life
Two house holders sitting in the dusky darkness invite fondly the daily serpents
May be exchanging pain or pleasure!
May be counting dreams and tears!
May be pining for their progeny lost in life's dirty flood!
Is darkness reddening on the man's face under the convoluted sky?

Someone standing on the corpses of dreams is shouting fiercely -
"What did I do, what could I do?
Has anyone heard in an empty house the splash of well water at midnight?
Heard the stories of death the well waters say?
What did I do, what could I do?"

On a sentence running longish, on one side a revolver, a garland on another,
Are the hands mine?

I opened the doors of a century
I stretched my hands to the man fainted on splintered dreams

I touched with my fingers the air carrying dust, poverty,
hunger, and half naked

bodies
Is the air stuck!
Are hands reddening in angry fire!
Is man reddening in my reddish hands!
Are the roads trekked by man reddening?

A man riding another is slain on the street by still another
Who the criminal, who the convict?

Nothing else in the room except some magazines and books
here and there and some
cloth strained gun-powder poems
A delusion of someone sitting in an empty chair mid room
looking severely at me.
Is the word demanding human sacrifice?
Breathless sentences running longish.
Truly, poetry is *secret movement* (1990)

INDIA! INDIA!!

Is the curtain sliding on the city's body?

Just at a touch or no of the news paper that day
Full of blood!
Blood flowing from
The same soil
Same body
Same soul
Same wound

I looked at my hands once
In the photo printed prominently under the headline
On one side:
Demented men sitting on encyclopedia throwing stones
at philosophical trees

On another side:
Holding with both hands a young girl's broken body drifted in
devilish dust
Stone statues cruelly cursing the world

I looked at my hands once more.
My hands that sometimes shower flowers, poems....
and stamens of moonlight
Are full of thorns, thorns

Is the city man changing himself as a corpus of thorns?
The hands pinning needles on the city corpus are they mine
Is God here wounded too?

Shanti, Shanti, Shanti !
Is not salvation a must even if a hungry man is dying!

May the patriots live long!
May chairs of Holiness prosper!
May politicians riding tigers increase
Shanti, Shanti, Shanti
Shanti all pervading (1992)

DATELINE HYDERBAD (1990 December 8)

When all the guardians of all the directions in the sky are
resting a man
Sitting by his own corpse in a city lane at mid night is
saying this:

" I'm not dead
Somebody is carrying me, somebody is sitting me in a vehicle.
No, no, this is my body, don't touch me, don't touch me"

The man caressing his corpse is saying further:
" I live a hard life, I live here only
Right here somebody has trampled me
Somebody stabbed me, cut off my hands and legs
They do not know who I am, I do not know who they are"

And after that, holding my both hands he asked pitiably:

" Will you lend me half of your body?
I will live once again
Will you lend me your hands and legs?
I will go searching my wife and children"

"No need of eyes, then?'
" No, no I can't stand seeing man's blood
Hands and legs do for eyes"

I gave him then and there what all he wanted once for all
Next minute he wasn't there
Vanished carrying his own corpse in the pool of dark

But I am still there unable to bear the weight, weight,
unable to die, die

Holding in my both hands the couple of eyes that saw the
end if the world

"Man is one, God is one" pours a public demon pots of tears
Fiercely in the middle of the city street.
All over the sky is a big smoke as the earth broke (1990)

IN THE SHADOWS OF CURFEW...

Where am I, where?
No wind moving, no clock ticking.
All over the air smell of burnt up sentences
Where am I, where?

No lamp burning; no telephone ringing.
All over the room darkness, darkness sharpening knives.
Blood in the darkish hands enveloping me
Where am I, where?

No window opening, no thought continuing.
Now that mid night is a signal, I think the traitor woke up
Some stirring by the compound wall like black cobras moving
in the dark shrubs
Where am I, where?

Sound of feet on the stairs -
See, someone coming throwing away doors
See, someone moving behind the curtain
Where am I, where?

Is it the city, in the hell of the city, in horror opening its mouth
Is it in the death's freezing silence? Somewhere at the bottom
of a secret chest?
Is it in the body with frozen blood? In bodilessness?
Where am I, where?

Don't be afraid dear, don't be
Our names hence forth won't be in the hit list;
Death's stamp indefatigable
Don't be afraid, don't be
Aren't we safe in the palms of the earth's meriful face?
Somebody placed a bouquet here, take it, take it (1990)

BEYOND THE WINDOW . . .

Sat alone in the room
Somebody hurling knives at the heart

Beyond the window an assassin in the rose garden

Thoughts opening in the cages of words
In the burning bushes of summer fires a noon time damsel
A tiger in the form of hunger

Sat alone in the room
Somebody making a grave in the heart

Beyond the window
Beyond the mad elephants of summer
In the embrace of a lesser goddess under the umbrella of fire
raging in a thousand circles

Someone fear shook, resembling me

Sat alone in the room
Death various kinds

(1963)

MY WORDS, STONES THROWN AT ME

Nooses my musings
Menacles my words
Stones thrown at me my words

I have no dwelling
No annihilation

I usurp restlessness
I wear forest moon light

When horror wakes up at mid night
Sitting on void as void
I compose my song on the stars shooting

Where the sky is unseen
Where darkness stood as a scaffold
Sitting on silence as silence
I compose my song on lamps in the wind

I have no form
My form is my song

(1948)

A MOMENT AGO THERE

How beautiful that street a moment ago,
How splendorous!

Trees trekking, statues strolling, eyes wide, hands ornamented, plazas magnetic, wealth exhibited, voices low sweet, hands greeting, how do you dos, evenings flooded, trade flourishing, housewives spraying life's perfumes under dream umbrellas, angels in daylight with their bunch of celestial damsels.

How beautiful that street a moment ago
How charming!

Was I walking on beauty's longitude?
Was I walking on the starry streets?
Was I walking in the electric lights of the market?

Memories will not but haunt
See, some vehicle carrying dark fiends
Is dashing through just this way...

Take care!
Even God is helpless here
(Dedicated to Besant Road, Vijayawada: 1998 Dec'26)

SLUM CLEARANCE

(I am from language and will return to language)

■ Peter Riley

As I sit before the television set at times,
As I listen at times to two dealers of Saraswati idols
Dead language, all dead language; dais full of the noise of skeletons!

No two lives for the alphabet
Unless a new born babe enters the body
Or shelters in the body of a street man.
Letters have no other life; even that in another form

Now I'll start the poem
To my best in the test tube language

See the one faceless, Godless approaching
Has swallowed an entire street in the city.

(Prior to this there on either side of the black canal beside the Mahankali Temple ever so many ruined bodies living some how unable, unable, unable to withstand the fists of darkness, ever so many crowds crowded, celebrating festivals of hunger in full moon light and it seems all of a sudden one mid night all is silence, no one, no temple, everything matash, matash).

Want evidence, want documents!
Evacuees sleeping in the Musi waters are the eye witness

Street after street after street,
Gradually he made his own body an industrial complex

Five fingers, only one impression

Smoke, from the head

Flag, the only one in clouds
Everything just one blue print

Since the mask is impregnable
The face in the public gardens is one
The face in a safety locker is another

Smell of patriotism all the way the man walks on
Smell of progress, progress, progress

Friend, Srinivas! should I again say
Why men are crying? (1992)

:

SEEING EVERYDAY

Am seeing everyday
Datura plants, saline lands behind those eyes
Lakes flaring up, words being hanged

Am seeing everyday
Am walking everyday
Between fears rising palmyra high in those eyes
Between frightening thighs
Between burning noons
Between raging hibiscus

Am seeing everyday
Am walking everyday
Am listening with skilled memory
The cries of hunger just born behind those eyes
Songs of exits in tears

Am seeing everyday
Am walking everyday
Am listening with skilful memory.
No lamp will kindle behind those eyes
No music heard there

(1948)

BY MOTHER COW

Has anyone seen the dance of Word
In the shadows of the swords at noon?
Has anyone heard the music of Word at the bottom of heart?

I heard
I saw in Ravi Sastry's stories
By mother cow, by the dot of blood on Maridi Mahalakshmi's forehead

I say just one word
He is the one story writer who created the damsel of fire in the tears of the gangs, he alone
All along his walk the neighing of Word horses trotting
The roar of a sea of stories of a life heroic and serene

(1983)

THE MAGICIAN

Mirror doesn't mean a body hung on the wall
It's your conscience

Always a magician behind your reflection
Always a heroic mounted horseman
Always a clown breaking and eating the secrets of the world
as an outsider
Mirror is your world innermost

Since impossible - pulling, images floating on the mirror
I straight away entered the mirror myself.
No more my image in the mirror now.
But I am there alone bodiless (1990)

THE POLITICAL GLUTTON

On the contemporary political platform -
A democratic bunyan tree omniscient
Stands he life size, unmoving to realities

A presidential chair -
Yelling proletarian ideologies,
Assuredly the political glutton -
Patriotism a protective label -
Strong shoulders above norms -
A sun scorching on head for the uplift of the poor

Under the shining bald head of public welfare
Tiny windows of eyes spread Satyagraha
Smile on lips just of democratic progress

Voluntary service, a red dot between eyebrows
A Sarvodaya pot glowing,
Finger tips sprinkling Abhyudaya
Sound like rupee coins, songs and slogans

Flags, plans, attractive facial stamps whatever
In the art of public speaking
Truly a top class artist

Beyond socialism in the test tube -
Nose smelling future revolution.
Satyam, Ahimasa his beard and mustache.
Severed breasts of a proletarian damsel in the chemical
compound of ideologies

Covered in bronze, on a high pedestal at the city gate
He throws gold coins of promises Hiranya
What a sport for me tattoeing syllables of socialism on his face
Or letting red scorpions creep on his vertebra (1972)

SRI SRI

Sri Sri
Two letters
Two swords between earth and sky

One eye, flashing sword light; another a strange moon light
Red rays of dawn taking shape of words Sri, Sri
The Mahakavi's hands revealing the
Secrets of dawn on desert borders

Just bring Sri Sri once to mind
In unrest and anguish everywhere
See the grand celebration of Word in the precincts of
Vagdevi's temple
See the sun rising at midnight on dark mountain ranges
See the flourish of poetic swords slaying vice

Just bring Sri Sri once to mind
See man shaking off his chains
See the fabulous eagles resting on hands rising through
the grave yard

When Sri Sri's Word power is felt
No wonder stones become words and trees dance
Even the lifeless wake up
Even the wounded soldiers of life march
Man opens his eye in his severed head

All is poetic

So many wonders in Sri Sri's magical poetic mirror
A dare devil breaking the bridge of swords on time and space
War cries against hunger, poverty, injustice, atrocities

Against man exploiting, against rock edicts
Against modern fiends with their birth sequence
Terrible thunder on the Day of Doom

All is poetic

Unprecedented unique Sri Sri's stylish prose
Once again I say just bring Sri Sri once to mind
See the grand celebration of Word in the precincts of
Vagdevi's temple
See Sri Sri singing on the future sun rises
Meanwhile silence, silence on silence (1983)

IT'S ME THE EYE OF FIRE ON THE WALLS OF YOUR ROOM

Oh! Dreamer, revealing unseen worlds in the shadows
of tragic trees rolling

I am within you alone, in your tears only
Have I not heard several times your cry in the prohibited city
It's me the eye of fire on the walls of your room

Someone is opening the doors of dreams midnight in the street
May be a tiger laughing
May be an ascetic throwing forest flowers on the scaffold
May be a garden angel blessing unknown soldiers
May be death's charioteer on the fringes of time's clouds

Midnight, mid street some one is confounding
May be the stone statues taking a walk
May be the puppet on beds of darkness warning
May be the traitor's mean feet confusing life signals

Oh! Dreamer, dancing naked on the longitude of death
midnight, mid street

Is it yours the form reflected in the burning tears?
Look, death's disturbed sleep is just for a moment!

Man's torture is a special art in the city installed on
the devil's spine

Even in dream he is shackled (1986)

INNER LAMENTATION

Is death in a garland?
Is death in hands saluting?
Vulgar word, vulgar word, vulgar word

"Bodies are sold here
Hands holding flags and revolvers are also sold separately
Want masked men who make man vanish just in seconds?
Want an assassin who memorised the modern mathematical
equations of death?
All material related to human detonation sold here
A special fuel changing man as tool of death also sold here"

The severed head's warning is nothing
Before the wall proster shouting commercial wares!

Are flower plants weeping?
All vulgar words are here
All harsh sounds..... play of destruction, sport of burning
As if death was scared looking at its won face

Can he or not the man walking sleep step out of the
pool of blood!
Are flower plants cursing?

Inner lamentation is nothing
Before the wall poster shouting in steel voice

Music is still heard in chambers of luxury
Stage conductors are dancing still
Worship of the naked goddess is uninterrupted

How meaningless life is! (1991)

THE GREAT SILENCE

Can I say the sun is shining since I am seeing?
Injury on the face is inevitable

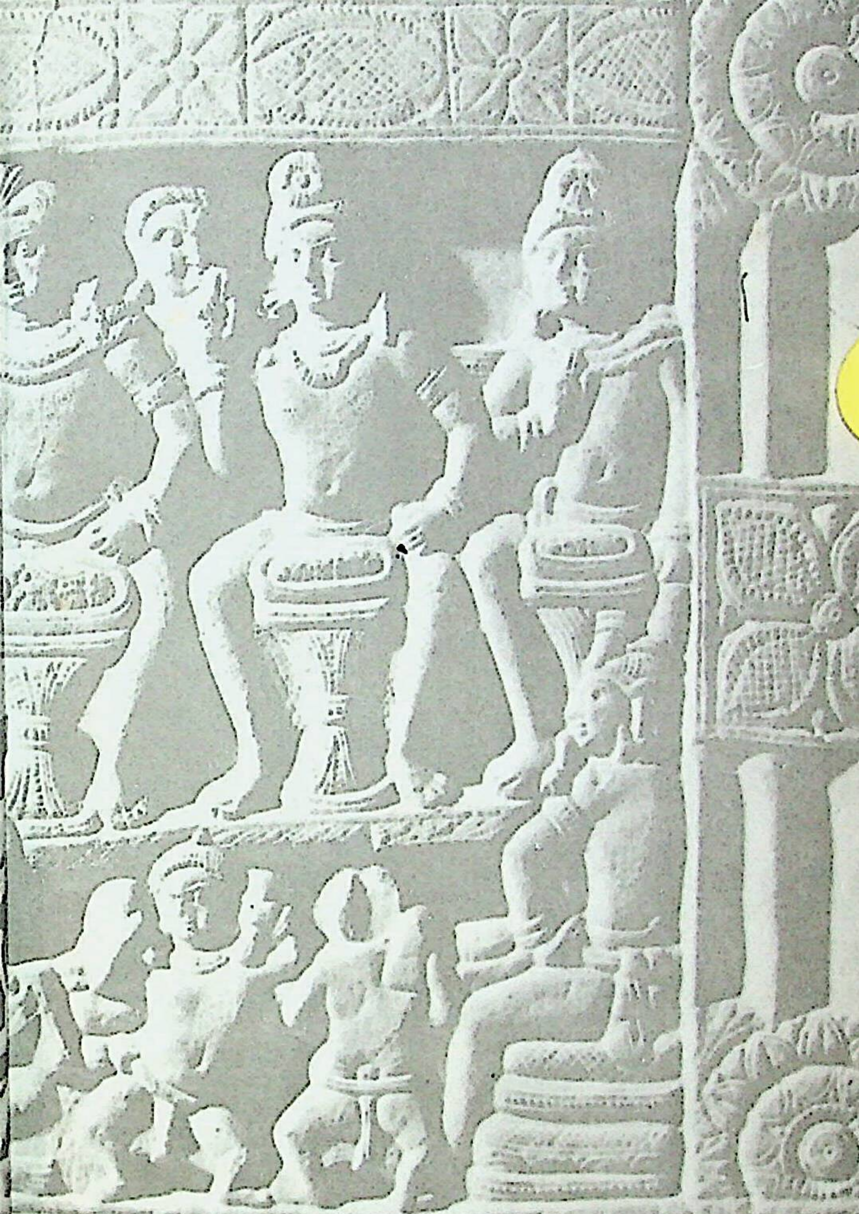
A tragic line like the nail dig of virgin death
On the special face I wore
Before it branches of into a hundred thousand tongues
And burns me up totally, suddenly a second...

I entered the secret world gyrating round the stone statues
behind my eyes
Entered a great drop of tear coming out of life's confutations
Entered the dream surrounded by thorns behind the tear drop
Entered the reflections in the splinters of the mirror
hanging on dream walls

One touch, one silence all over
No other signature except my hand writing on the sword
dangling on my head
Friend, I am stepping into the great pure
and pious silence now
The curtain is sliding slowly............ slowly
Slowly............... (1992)







Ajanta (1929-1998) Perhaps the only Telugu poet who was recognized as a major poet as soon as he published his first poem. His *Cetlu Kulutunna Drsyam* [A scene of Falling Trees] made a powerful impression on contemporary literary taste for its perfect control of the free verse form and for its evocative diction and imagery. Ajanta wrote very infrequently but nearly everything he wrote was read and reread by his readers. Ajanta, whose birth name is **Penumarti Viswanatha Sastri**, worked most of his active life as editor of Andhra Prabha, a Telugu daily. In 1993, his friends published a volume of his poems, *Swapna-lipi* [Vijayawada: Kavitvam Prachuranalu] for which he rewrote, from memory, all the poems he had published earlier in various journals. This book got him Sahitya Akademi award in 1997.

Vegunta Mohan Prasad (b.1942-) is probably the only poet in Telugu who writes poems which defy Telugu syntax. His early poems from his *Citi-cinta express* a fragmented subjectivity and a shattered universe. Resorting to the undertones of words. Mohan Prasad, who adopted a monosyllabic pen name **Mo** wrote poems depicting a language that cannot be spoken in words, and a world which can only be silently groped at through words that have gone blind of sensibilities. Mo is a quietly disturbing poet, who depicts the contemporary confusion of content, while his critics accuse him of losing contact with the external world and perhaps even with his readers.

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